

We claim:

1. A system of consolidating mailings to decrease mailing costs, comprising:

a controller for maintaining a schedule of mailings, said mailings being originally scheduled to be sent separately, and said mailings including mailings having in common a destination address; and

software for re-scheduling said mailings having in common a destination address so that said re-scheduled mailings may be combined into a single mailing.

2. A system as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an addressing device for addressing envelopes; and

an inserter arranged to insert documents in said envelopes based on said schedule,

wherein said controller is arranged to control said addressing device and said inserter in order to assemble said re-scheduled combined mailings.

3. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said schedule further lists document parameters indicative of document weight, and wherein a number of mailings that are combined is limited by a total weight of the combined mailings.

4. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said schedule includes records containing data concerning preparation of documents to be included in said mailings, data concerning mailing dates, and address data, said data being provided by remote source computers linked to the computer by a network.
5. A system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the controller informs the source computers of changes in said schedule.
6. A system as claimed in claim 4, wherein said records include mailing date windows within which a mailing can occur, and said control program combines said mailings with reference to said mailing date windows.
7. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said system is arranged to check different combinations of said mailings, assign a cost score to each combination, and schedule said mailings by determining a lowest cost score.
8. A method of consolidating mailings to decrease mailing costs, comprising the steps of:
- maintaining a schedule of mailings, said mailings being originally scheduled to occur at different times, and

said mailings including mailings having in common a destination address; and

software for re-scheduling said mailings having in common a destination address so that said re-scheduled mailings may be combined into a single mailing.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, further comprising the step of controlling an addressing device and an inserter in order to automatically assemble said combined mailings.
10. A method as claimed in claim 8, further comprising the steps of including in said schedule document parameters indicative of document weight, and limiting a number of mailings that are combined is based on a total weight of the combined mailings.
11. A method as claimed in claim 8, further comprising the step of including in said schedule records containing data concerning preparation of documents to be included in said mailings, data concerning mailing dates, and address data, said data being provided by remote source computers linked to the computer by a network.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11, further comprising the step of having the controller inform the source computers of changes in said schedule.
13. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said records include mailing date windows within which a mailing can occur, and further comprising the step of having said control program combine said mailings with reference to said mailing date windows.
14. A method as claimed in claim 8, further comprising the step of different combinations of said mailings, assigning a cost score to each combination, and scheduling said mailings by determining a lowest cost score.
15. Software for consolidating mailings to decrease mailing costs,
- wherein said software is applied to a schedule of mailings, said mailings being originally scheduled to occur at different times, and said mailings including mailings having in common a destination address, and
- wherein said software re-schedules said mailings having in common a destination address so that said re-scheduled mailings may be combined into a single mailing.

16. Software as claimed in claim 15, wherein said schedule further lists document parameters indicative of document weight, and wherein said software limits a number of mailings to be combined by a total weight of the combined mailings.
17. Software as claimed in claim 15, wherein said schedule includes records containing data concerning preparation of documents to be included in said mailings, data concerning mailing dates, and address data, said data being provided by remote source computers linked to the computer by a network.
18. Software as claimed in claim 17, wherein said records include mailing date windows within which a mailing can occur, and said control program combines said mailings with reference to said mailing date windows.
19. Software as claimed in claim 15, wherein said software is arranged to check different combinations of said mailings, assign a cost score to each combination, and schedule said mailings by determining a lowest cost score.